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The Honourable Tony Clement, PC, MP
Minister of Industry

The Announcement of Automotive Partnership Canada

Toronto, Ontario
April 16, 2009

Check Against Delivery

Good morning.

Today's announcement will provide some of the details on our government's strategy to keep automotive research capacity in Canada.

I am very pleased to be here today to launch an initiative that is designed to bring Canada's top automotive researchers together with the auto industry in a program that will be driven by industry needs.

Automotive Partnership Canada will provide funding for major collaborative research projects that will lead to innovation and greater competitiveness.

The $145 million for the Auto Partnership was committed as part of Budget 2008, and over the past several months industry has been closely involved in planning this initiative through an industry task force.

Among other things, this group provided important recommendations on the most pressing and rewarding research priorities on which to focus. We are working to forge stronger, long-lasting bonds between industry and our strong post-secondary research community.

I'm pleased to note that Rob Wildeboer of Martinrea International, who dedicated many hours as Co-chair of the Industry Task Force, is here with us today and I want to thank him too, for his excellent guidance and advice.

Research conducted through this initiative will result in cars that have a lower impact on the environment, improved technology to meet the needs of drivers, and better manufacturing processes that make Canadian automotive companies more flexible, efficient and sustainable.

In recent weeks, we have announced more details on short-term solutions to help manufacturers in the automobile sector to weather these difficult economic times and to keep workers working. Automotive Partnership Canada is forward-looking, because it promotes the development of advanced technologies and creates employment.

It will also reinforce Canada's reputation as an attractive place to carry out research and encourage industry to look to this country to meet its R&D needs.

A central project office, located in Mississauga, will be an integrated point of service dedicated to serving industry and its R&D needs. It will be co-located with the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Materials and Manufacturing, which will facilitate coordination between federal and provincial programs.

The project office will be the focal point for bringing together people and ideas. It will proactively build partnerships based on the needs of industry and the abilities of researchers in academia and the National Research Council. It will also be the portal to access program funding from the participating federal agencies, which will work together to offer streamlined, client-oriented funding processes.

In late March, along with the U.S. Government, the governments of Canada and Ontario approved interim loans to help the auto industry deal with these tough economic times and save workers' jobs while they undertake a more fundamental restructuring.

This support is in addition to the recently announced Canadian Warranty Commitment Program, under which the federal government committed to honouring consumer warranties on new vehicles purchased from GMCL and Chrysler Canada Inc. for a limited period while improved restructuring plans are put in place.

It also supplements measures announced in Canada's Economic Action Plan for the Canadian Secured Credit Facility to support consumer demand, the Community Adjustment Fund to support distressed communities, and additional funds provided to Export Development Canada to expand its program of accounts receivable insurance for auto parts suppliers.

Automotive Partnership Canada looks further ahead by boosting Canada's ability to develop the technology of the future and create the jobs of the future.

This initiative is just part of our government's overall commitment to science and technology and part of our plan to protect Canadians during the global recession and nurture the conditions for a bright, successful future.

We consulted with Canadians and we acted immediately to keep our economy moving. These actions included ramping up our work on the Science and Technology Strategy.

Our investments in research are guided by the Science and Technology Strategy that we released in May 2007. It was called *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*, and it identified priority areas where Canadians would benefit from more research.

We have backed up our commitment to science and technology in each one of our budgets by making major investments in research, infrastructure and training opportunities.

We continued this year, when we unveiled Canada's Economic Action Plan at the end of January. Budget 2009 provides $5.1 billion for a number of science and technology initiatives, including $2 billion in infrastructure investments to help universities and colleges maintain and expand their facilities.

More students are receiving support as they work towards becoming the highly skilled people that our economy needs. Specifically, we have added $87.5 million over three years to the Canada Graduate Scholarships program, and will provide up to 600 more graduate internships through the Industrial Research and Development Internship program.

Partnerships are extremely important, and so we have increased the opportunities for universities and industry to get together to make sure that the discoveries made by our scientists are brought into the marketplace where everyone can benefit from them. This will be one of Automotive

Partnership Canada's major priorities.

The National Research Council will be an active player in this research through facilities such as its Centre for Automotive Materials and Manufacturing in London. That centre is focused on engineering and research on lightweight materials and alternative fuels.

We will continue to make these types of strategic investments in science and technology to ensure that Canada remains competitive in the current economic climate.

As I said, we are proud to live up to our commitment to provide the resources the research community needs.

We look forward to seeing the innovative research proposals that Automotive Partnership Canada will attract from our community of talented automotive researchers.

In closing, I want to commend the government partners in this initiative for the excellent job they have done in laying the groundwork to get Automotive Partnership Canada moving.

The work done by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, the National Research Council, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the Canada Excellence Research Chairs program will ensure that the research done under this initiative meets world-class standards of excellence, and that it focuses on productive and vital areas.

In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Fortier for her commitment and leadership role in the creation of Automotive Partnership Canada.

Thank you.

I welcome your questions.

Date Modified: 2009-05-10